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Pres^d Mr *Burges*
Dedham

A present from J Read Esq

SERMON,

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DELIVERED

AT THE FUNERAL

OF

MRS. CHLOE READ,

WIFE OF JOEL READ, ESQ. OF ATTLEBOROUGH,

WHO DIED 3d MARCH, 1826, AGED 63 YEARS:

BY THOMAS WILLIAMS,

PASTOR OF THE FIRST CHURCH IN ATTLEBOROUGH.

Possess'd of worth, which but a few can boast;
By those, who knew her best, belov'd the most.—

J. B.

PAWTUCKET:

PRINTED BY RANDALL MEACHAM.

1827.

SERMON.

1 THESS. IV, 18.

Wherefore, comfort one another with these words.

It appears to have been the great object of the apostle, in his epistles to the churches, to promote the instruction and comfort of his christian brethren. To accomplish this important object, he offered such considerations, as were suited to their various circumstances, afflictions and sorrows. In some churches, many evils arose from erroneous sentiments and sinful practices. But among the Thessalonian professors, there appears to have been no prevailing sentiment, or practice, that was highly censurable. They were firmly united in the doctrines, duties and enjoyments of the gospel. On this account, when any of their number were removed by death, they were liable to mourn for their pious friends, with an improper degree of sorrow. And from our context, there is reason to conclude, that they had, in some instances, conducted in this manner. The apostle also appears to suppose, that they were in some degree of ignorance, or error, respecting the condition of their deceased brethren.—He therefore declared to the church of the Thessalonians, the glorious resurrection of the bodies of the righteous; and their eternal happiness in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ in heaven. He says, “I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them who are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others, who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also, who sleep

in Jesus, will God bring with him. For this we say unto you, by the word of the Lord, that we, who are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them who are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we, who are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air. And so shall we ever be with the Lord."

What the apostle declares to his christian brethren respecting their pious friends, who were dead in Christ, he expressly says, was by the word of the Lord; or according to the revealed instructions of the gospel. With these instructions, he required that they should comfort themselves under the affliction, which they suffered by the death of their pious friends. He says, "*Wherefore, comfort one another with these words.*"

The text, then, in its proper connection, places before us the following sentiment: The gospel affords comfort to christians, who are afflicted by the death of pious friends.

To illustrate this sentiment, it is proposed,

I. To show why the death of pious friends is an affliction to christians; and,

II. To show what comfort the gospel affords to christians, who are afflicted by the death of pious friends.

I. It is proposed to show, why the death of pious friends is an affliction to christians.

When pious friends are removed by death, christians often find themselves to be more deeply afflicted than they expected they should be by such an event. It is an event, which they are not commonly disposed to anticipate. And when it occurs, it is often attended with consequences, that are more extensive and afflictive, than could have been foreseen. But, in every instance, the death of a pious friend is to surviving christians an afflictive dispensation. For,

1. Of all created objects, pious friends are the most

endeared to the hearts of christians. Piety is the highest excellence, that can exist in the character of human beings. And it lays a foundation for the most pure and perfect affection and friendship, that can ever exist between rational creatures. Christian friends are united, in mutual affection, by the strong and tender bonds of truth and duty. Christians are required and induced to esteem and love their brethren, from their common regard to God and the Lord Jesus Christ and the interests of his holy kingdom. From their common regard to the greatest and best objects, the hearts of christians are united in complacent and delightful affection. No other created objects are more highly esteemed and beloved, by the Supreme Being, than his humble and pious children. When christians follow the example of their Heavenly Father, they love their brethren with pure and fervent affections. But, besides the mutual esteem and love, which are common to all christians, there exist between pious friends many endearments, which are peculiar to themselves and which arise from their peculiar intimacy. Between pious friends, there is a special and familiar acquaintance. And such an acquaintance increases and strengthens their mutual affection. In proportion to their esteem and love is the affliction of surviving christians, when their pious friends are removed by death. Such an event destroys their mutual and endearing expression of holy affections. Nor can surviving christians find, among created objects, any beings, that are worthy to possess in their hearts the place that was sacred to their pious friends. Christians, then, will be afflicted, when, by the death of such friends, they are deprived of the most worthy and endeared objects of their holy and tender affections.

2. The death of pious friends deprives christians of the enjoyments, which they have received from their holy friendship. As christians are united in their sentiments, affections, interests, sufferings and enjoyments, their friendship is a constant source of mutual comfort and delight. In this friendship they find relief and sup-

port, in the midst of their numerous afflictions and under their heart-breaking imperfections. Christians can declare to pious friends the troubles and sorrows, which oppress their weary and feeble spirits. In this manner they divide and diminish their common afflictions. But, in their pious friendship, while they communicate the hopes and joys of their own hearts, they multiply and increase their mutual consolations and enjoyments. The conversion, example and prayers of pious friends greatly encourage and animate the feeble spirits of christians, in their services and temptations. The duties of christians become doubly pleasant, in the communion of their brethren. To promote the spiritual fellowship and happiness of christians, their Saviour has appointed the ordinances of the gospel. And while they walk in obedience to his commands, they can say from their own joyful experience, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity."

The longer christians live in mutual affection and friendship, the greater are their spiritual consolations and enjoyments. And nothing, but death, which deprives christians of their pious friends, can destroy the benefits and pleasures of their holy friendship. But death puts a period to the comforts and joys they have received from the beloved society and endeared fellowship of their christian friends. The longer christians have enjoyed the benefits of holy friendship, the greater is their affliction, when their pious friends are removed by death. New friends, however pious, attentive and affectionate, cannot supply the place of those, who have been tried for many years and been found a comfort and joy, through many scenes of affliction and sorrow. The death of pious friends is, therefore, an affliction, which christians will feel and lament, as long as they live. Such an event deprives christians of their most endearing enjoyments, which no surviving connections, nor acquaintance, can restore.

3. The death of pious friends deprives christians of

the benefits, which they hoped to receive from their future services. The longer christians have been blessed with the services of their brethren, the more necessary do they seem to their future comfort and happiness. As the hearts of christians are constantly becoming more loosened from worldly objects, pursuits and enjoyments, they are more closely united to their pious friends. As the number of such friends is lessened by the conquests of death, they, who survive, are, to their christian brethren, more necessary and desirable. Though the number of christian connections and acquaintance may increase, yet the number of christian friends, when we have arrived at the midst of our days; and especially, as we enter the decline of life, commonly, if not always, decreases. Real, cordial friendships, even among christians, are not formed in a day; nor matured, without the changes and trials of many years. Such esteem and love, as do not grow and strengthen, through the knowledge of God and by tried faithfulness in the service of the Lord Jesus Christ, cannot deserve the name of pious friendship. How rare then; and how precious, are christian friends! The better they are known and the longer they are tried, the more dear they become to the hearts and the hopes of real and faithful christians. To such christians the interests of religion on earth rise before their minds, with an increasing and unbounded importance. To such christians the errors and delusions, which still prevail in this world, constantly assume a more alarming and destructive appearance. To such christians the number of churches, of religious professors and ministers of the gospel, who take unto themselves the whole armor of God and seem able and prepared to stand in the evil day, appears to lessen, while the whole number of churches, professors and ministers, rapidly increases. In such a day and with such prospects, upon whom can the heart of a faithful christian repose, with any comfort and confidence? Surely, upon no one, whom he does not love and by whom he is not loved, in the truth

and for the truth's sake. But how can christians, who have friends of such a character, bear to be deprived of their services in favor of the gospel and the kingdom of God, while they see and feel, day after day and year after year, their indispensable importance and increasing value?—Christians will most fondly hope and most ardently desire, that they may still enjoy the services and benefits of that holy friendship, which is founded on supreme love to God and the Lord Jesus Christ; and upon the fundamental and immutable doctrines of the everlasting gospel. But death, which removes such friends from the church on earth, deprives christians of the benefits, which they desired and hoped to receive from their future services. The death of pious friends is, then, to faithful christians one of the heaviest and sorest afflictions they can ever experience. Christians are often more willing to depart and leave their friends, than to be left by their friends, in this evil world. It is now proposed,

• II. To show what comfort the gospel affords to christians, who are afflicted by the death of pious friends.

Christians are wholly indebted to the gospel for the knowledge, which they possess, respecting their future existence. They, who are wholly without the faith and hope, that are founded on the word of God, are without support and comfort, when they are deprived of their relatives and connections. But God would not have christians to be ignorant, concerning those who are asleep, that they sorrow not, even as others, who have no hope. On this important subject, the gospel affords such instructions, as are suited to comfort the hearts of christians, who are afflicted by the death of pious friends.

1. The gospel teaches christians, that the spirits of their pious friends do, at death, immediately enter into a state of perfect happiness. Their minds being then freed from darkness and their hearts from sin, they are fitted to join the spirits of the just, who are made perfect; and to be united in their holy services and enjoy-

ments in heaven. The Lord Jesus Christ declares, that when Lazarus, the pious beggar, died, he was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom. And to the penitent malefactor, who was dying on the cross by his side, he said, "Verily I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." And the apostle plainly informs us, that when christians are absent from the body, they are present with the Lord. To be united to the holy company of redeemed sinners, who dwell in the presence of their Saviour, must afford the departed spirits of the pious the most pure and perfect enjoyment. It is far better for christians to depart and be with Christ, than it is to remain on earth. If christians properly consider how much their pious friends gain by death, they will be comforted in view of the happy condition of their immortal spirits, when they leave their mortal bodies.

2. According to the gospel, the bodies of all persons, who have died in the Lord, will, at the last day, be raised in glory. The human body, though it is the most curious, beautiful and wonderful structure among material objects, becomes very vile and loathsome, when it is left by the living soul. The state of a sickly, dying and dead body, which has been the beloved residence of a pious friend, is to christians an afflictive and painful sight. But the gospel gives the most consoling instructions respecting the resurrection of the bodies of the righteous. On this subject the apostle discourses, very particularly, in his epistles to the churches. To the saints at Corinth he says, respecting the resurrection of the body, "It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body." And he further says, "Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep; but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in

the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised incorruptible and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption; and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying, that is written, O death! where is thy sting? O grave! where is thy victory?" The glorious and triumphant resurrection of the righteous will be a complete victory over the king of terrors. The bodies of the saints will be raised in perfect vigour, beauty and glory. The apostle says, "Our conversation is in heaven; whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ; who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working, by which he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." The resurrection and glorification of the bodies of the righteous are suited to afford christians, not merely support and comfort, but joy and triumph, under the humbling and afflictive circumstances, which attend the decease and burial of their pious friends.

3. Christians may receive comfort, when they are afflicted by the removal of pious friends by death, from the instructions of the gospel respecting the final judgment. On that great and solemn day, the Lord Jesus Christ will collect, into one assembly, the innumerable multitude of his redeemed people. And every expression of affection, which they had ever shown to his brethren, he will approve and reward, as an evidence of true love and friendship to himself. Though the righteous will be raised in glory at the last day and be exalted at the right hand of their Saviour and Judge, yet they will be forever clothed with humility. And being truly humble, they will be fitted to be perfectly united in one glorious society; and to dwell and reign forever in perfect love and friendship with their God and Saviour in heaven. How happy will every chris-

tian be, when he shall find himself and all his pious friends, with whom he labored and suffered on earth, collected and united with the millions of redeemed sinners in one perfect and glorious assembly ! No one of the friends and servants of God, who had lived on earth from the death of Abel until the final judgment, shall be forgotten. None shall be absent. None shall be condemned. None shall be afflicted, or ashamed. But they shall be approved and rewarded ; they shall be loved and blessed, by the Almighty and Omniscient Sovereign and Judge of heaven and earth. And they will be, even in the judgment of the wicked, by whom they were opposed and hated in this life, proper and worthy objects of the esteem and love, which their Saviour will express, when he shall say,—“ Come, ye blessed of my Father ; inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” The afflictions and sorrows, which surround christians on the deaths and at the graves of their pious friends, will be forever turned into comfort and joy, by the decisions of the final judgment.

4. The gospel affords comfort to christians, who are afflicted by the death of their pious friends, from the prospect of their eternal residence with their Lord and Saviour in the kingdom of glory. The complete redemption of his people was the great object, which God proposed to himself in his eternal counsel. This object he has regarded and pursued, in all the works and wonders of creation and providence. This object he will pursue, through all future ages, until the scenes of earth and time shall end. And by the decisions of the final judgment God will finish, for eternity, the great purpose, which he formed in the eternal counsel of his own will. By the accomplishment of this purpose, he will most clearly exhibit the infinite perfections of his character and most perfectly gratify his everlasting benevolence. When the great purpose of redemption shall be completely accomplished, they, who were chosen by the Father and given to the Son and appointed

and predestinated to perfect holiness and happiness in the kingdom of heaven, will be formed into vessels of mercy and prepared unto glory. The perfections of the Almighty, ever blessed and ever gracious Jehovah, are engaged and bound to raise his people from sin, woe and shame, to perfect and endless holiness and happiness. "Christ loved the church and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word : that he might present it unto himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing ; but that it should be holy and without blemish."

The future beauty and blessedness of the people of God, in the presence and kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, are placed before Christians, by the light of divine truth, for their support and comfort under the trials and afflictions of the present life. In heaven, every christian will see and know, will love and enjoy all his pious friends, whom he knew on earth, as well as the millions and millions of the righteous whom in this life he never knew. And every christian will forever enjoy in heaven all the beauty and glory and praises of the immense multitude of redeemed sinners, whom no man can number and who will sing a song, which none can learn, but they who are redeemed from the earth. Well then might the apostle say, "I reckon that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory, that shall be revealed in us." And well may all christians say, "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory ; while we look not at the things, that are seen, but at the things, that are not seen, for the things, that are seen, are temporal ; but the things, that are not seen, are eternal." In the hope and prospect of an eternal residence in the kingdom of glory with the Lord Jesus Christ and his holy and happy people, it is the duty of christians to be comforted and rejoiced under the afflictions and sorrows, they may suffer, by the removal of pious friends by death. Their momentary separation and their present afflictions and

sorrows will be forgotten in their happy reunion; or be remembered only to increase their consolations and enjoyments in the presence and kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. The instructions of the gospel, then, afford abundant and everlasting consolations to christians, who are afflicted by the death of pious friends.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. Since the removal of pious friends by death is an afflictive event, real christians ought to be highly valued, while they are preserved in life. Real christians are the most valuable objects on earth. They are objects of peculiar attention, affection, kindness and care to God himself. It is written, "The Lord taketh pleasure in his people." And to the people of God the prophet says, "He, that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of his eye." God is greatly displeased, when any persons despise, oppose and hate his children.—The Lord Jesus Christ says, "Whoso shall offend one of these little ones, who believe in me, it were better for him, that a millstone were hanged about his neck and that he were drowned in the depths of the sea." For the sake of his people, God has reproved haughty kings and rebuked strong nations. And he says to his church, "I will contend with him, that contendeth with thee." He also says, "The nation and kingdom, that will not serve thee, shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted." And it is written "the kingdom and dominion and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High." All things were made by Christ and for him. And He is the head over all things unto the Church. Real Christians are members of his body. They are the children of God and heirs of his kingdom and shall inherit all things. It is for the sake of his church and children, that God has made this world: and for their sake he preserves and

governs all its interests and concerns. Real christians are the light of the world and the salt of the earth. Wherever they may be placed, in this state of trial, they have the peculiar protection and presence of God. Though in this life they are imperfect and feeble, afflicted and tempted, they will soon be raised to everlasting holiness and triumph in heaven. The children of God, therefore, are to be highly esteemed and valued amidst all their imperfections and distresses in this dark vale of tears. They are, in respect to the purposes of God and the interests of his kingdom, of greater importance and value than any other created beings in the universe. And while God is pleased to preserve their lives on earth, they ought to be highly esteemed and loved by all persons, whether they be relatives, or neighbors, saints, or sinners, friends, or foes.

2. Since the gospel affords comfort to christians, who are afflicted by the death of pious friends, it is highly important for christians to exhibit decisive evidence of piety. On such evidence the comfort of their pious friends and christian brethren, when they die, greatly depends. It is very painful to have occasion for many fears respecting the character and condition of those persons, for whom we would indulge the best hopes and enjoy the fairest prospects, after their removal from this world by death. Some persons, who think themselves to be christians, seem to suppose they may rest in having evidence of piety to themselves. They are not careful and faithful to afford evidence of piety to other persons. But every christian ought to manifest public and decisive evidence of true love to God, hatred of sin, faith in Christ, friendship to christians, compassion towards sinners and faithfulness respecting the general interests of religion. The Saviour says "Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel but on a candle-stick ; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your father, who is in heaven." Christians ought to manifest their

piety by a publick profession of religion, by a firm and joyful belief of the fundamental and essential doctrines of the gospel and by a humble, constant and zealous performance of its holy duties. And they ought always to advance and abound, in love and good works towards God and man. The apostle says, "we beseech you brethren ; and exhort you, by the Lord Jesus Christ, that as ye have received of us, how ye ought to walk and please God, so ye would abound more and more." They, who know God and the Lord Jesus Christ and the glory and grace of the gospel, have no reason to be ashamed, or afraid, to show their real character and manifest decisive evidence of piety. They ought to regard the importance of their example and influence, in respect to the instruction and consolation of christians and the conviction, repentance and salvation of sinners. And they ought, especially, to regard God, with such reverence and affection, as to obey and glorify him on earth and be prepared for an evident and triumphant admission into his heavenly kingdom. Then at death, they would leave to their surviving brethren abundant consolation. Every christian should be watchful and diligent, so to live, as to afford decisive evidence, at his death, that he has gone to heaven.

3. Since christians are greatly afflicted by the death of pious friends, they, who are pious, should be willing to live a long life in this evil world. If they should regard themselves only, they have more reasons for desiring to die than to live. But they ought to regard their brethren and the church of God, as well as themselves ; and much more than themselves. And for their sakes, they should be willing to live, to labor and suffer in this state of darkness and sorrow. This world becomes, indeed, more gloomy and tiresome to christians, the longer they live in it. If they live many years, it is to bury their dearest connections, to encounter renewed temptations, to endure repeated afflictions and to experience increasing infirmities. They have, therefore, many reasons to desire, that they may

depart from this vain world and be at rest from sin and sorrow in heaven. But though the earth becomes more empty and gloomy to real christians, the longer they live in it; and though heaven becomes more desirable and glorious, the longer they have been kept from it; yet the interests and the circumstances of the church and children of God on earth become, to his faithful servants, objects of deeper concern and more intense affection. The apostle says, in the name of christians, "We are confident and willing rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord." But while he could say, "I am in a straight betwixt two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better;" he did also say, "Nevertheless, to abide in the flesh is more needful for you. And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith; that your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me, by my coming to you again." The apostle was willing to live for the church of God and the faith, comfort and happiness of his christian brethren; though, for his own sake, he was very desirous to be absent from the body and present with the Lord. The objects and motives, for which the apostle was willing to live, should induce all christians to be willing to live a long life in this state of labor and trial. And while they do live, they should be diligent and faithful to promote the great designs and interests for which this life is important and desirable. They should so live, that their deaths may be an occasion of real affliction to the church and children of God on earth. It is a shame to christians and a disgrace to religion to live in such a manner, that there is no reason for other christians to be grieved and sorry that our example and influence are withdrawn from the church and the world, when we are called to die. Christians should so live, that they may have strong and joyful motives, to be willing and desirous to live many years, for the sake of Christ and his great kingdom.

4. Since the gospel affords comfort to christians respecting their pious friends, when they die, they have reason to be comforted in view of their own death. Christians will receive more consolation, through the gospel, when they die, than they can receive while they live, respecting the death of their pious friends. When their friends die, they have affliction, as well as consolation. But when they die themselves, they will have perfect consolation without the least affliction. God will then wipe all tears from their eyes and remove every sin and every sorrow from their hearts for ever. When Lazarus died, he was removed from his debasement and wretchedness on earth and exalted and comforted in the society and blessedness of saints in heaven. The psalmist, in the prospect of death, was not only comforted, but joyful and triumphant in the assurance of everlasting holiness and happiness in the presence and favour of God. He said "as for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness." Again, he says unto God, "In thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." At death christians are received into the presence of Christ, to be with him and to behold his glory and the glory of his redeemed people, in the mansions of eternal purity and blessedness. The prospect of such a state may well remove the sting of death and the sorrows and terrors of the grave. The confident and joyful prospect of their triumphant departure, from this evil world, affords christians a sufficient foundation for entire consolation and satisfaction, through the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, in respect to the time, the place, the manner and every circumstance, connection and consequence of the closing scene of their lives.

5. Since the gospel affords comfort to christians in respect to the greatest evils and afflictions, they will be very thankful for the gospel. The gospel is the only foundation of their faith and hope, comfort and happiness concerning any evil or affliction, that ever exists.

The purpose and glory of God, in the gospel, spread light and joy over all the scenes and events of this present life. The gospel carries the minds of christians beyond this dark vale of tears and opens to their view the future state of perfect holiness and eternal enjoyment. It surrounds the dissolution of heaven and earth and the awful decisions of the final judgment, with majesty and beauty. It turns the eyes and the hearts of christians on earth from their present afflictions, which are very light and but for a moment, to the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory in heaven. For such prospects to sinful, guilty, hateful and afflicted creatures, the gospel demands and deserves the liveliest emotions of gratitude and the loudest and sweetest songs of praise. When the apostle had exclaimed, "O wretched man, that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death," he says, "I thank God, through Jesus Christ, our Lord." Again, in view of the complete triumph of christians over sin and death, he says, "Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ." After the example of the holy apostle, all christians should render praise and thanks to God for the gospel of his grace. It is the foundation of their confidence and comfort, under the afflictions and troubles of this life. And it is the only possible foundation of any good hope or joy respecting the future and eternal existence.

6. Since the gospel affords comfort to christians in the greatest afflictions, we may perceive the folly of such persons as reject the gospel. The gospel is rejected by all persons, who live in impenitence and unbelief. And they reject it for the sake of worldly objects, the pleasures of sin, the delusions of error, or their own self-righteous performances. But these things will soon fail. And while they remain, they are wholly unworthy of the confidence and approbation of rational and immortal beings. Sinners will soon know, that nothing can support and comfort their hearts but the gospel, which they reject. On the death of pious friends.

whom sinners, as well as saints, ought highly to esteem and love, they have no portion in the peculiar consolations of the gospel. But they, as well as christians, must die ; and they must die soon. And if they remain of their present character, they will, at death, be forever removed from every comfort and from every hope. When sinners die, they leave their pious friends no comfort, nor hope, in respect to their deaths, or their future state. They who live without God and die without true faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, remain in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity. And they will forever feel the pains of the second death and suffer the endless torment and despair of hell. When the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised from their graves, they shall awake to shame and everlasting contempt. The Lord Jesus Christ has said, "The hour is coming, in which all, that are in their graves, shall hear his voice and shall come forth ; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life ; and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation." O, how great, then, is the sin, the folly and madness of all persons, who reject the gospel and treasure unto themselves wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God !—For God has appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness. And it is written, "He will render to every man according to his deeds ; to them, who by patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life ; but unto them, that are contentious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man, that doeth evil ;—but glory, honor and peace to every man that worketh good." It is the height of folly for any persons, against the plain, faithful and solemn declarations of their supreme and final judge, to imagine, that there is no essential difference between saints and sinners in this life ; that none will be unholy and sinful after death and forever ; that there is to be no general judgment of all

mankind and that the decisions of that day will not place the righteous in the kingdom of glory and consign the wicked to endless punishment and despair in hell. Such punishment and despair will be the portion of every person, who refuses, through this short term of trial, to repent of his sins and become holy, as God is holy.

7. Since the gospel affords comfort to christians, who are afflicted by the death of pious friends, it is their duty, under such an affliction, to repair to the gospel for consolation. On the gospel christians may safely rest their afflicted spirits, when they are called to commit the lifeless bodies of their pious friends to the humble and silent grave. For they may be assured, that their departed spirits have entered into a state of perfect happiness; that their bodies shall be raised at the last day, in strength, glory and beauty; that they shall be known and approved at the final judgment; and that they shall then be perfectly blessed in the full enjoyment of God to all eternity. Such are the certain prospects, which the gospel affords to christians for their consolation, respecting the death of their friends, who have died in the Lord. So the instructions of the gospel the apostle directs his brethren, in the words of our text for comfort, when afflicted by the death of pious friends.

Under such an affliction, a large portion of my hearers, on the present occasion, have peculiar reasons to repair to the gospel for consolation. The instance of death, which has occurred in this house, has collected a numerous circle of relations, connections, neighbors and friends. And, perhaps, there is but one opinion and judgment, in the minds of all persons present, respecting the character of her, whose remains are now before us. It is believed, that she has given decisive evidence of real piety during the many years, since she made a public profession of religion. Such a profession she made, on the 7th day of May, 1775. She was favored, in the days of her childhood and youth, with the in-

structions, example and prayers of her father, Deacon Jonathan Stanley, who is still remembered and mentioned among us, with esteem and affection. And in her early days she devoted herself unto Christ and his church. For more than fifty years she walked with the church and children of God, in the commandments and ordinances of the Lord. During the trials of so many years, she must have shown her real character. And it is certain, that in the last years of her life, her path has appeared to be the path of the just, which, as the shining light, shineth more and more unto the perfect day. The great doctrines and duties of the gospel were deeply wrought into her heart. An affecting and humbling knowledge of her depravity, sinfulness and ill-desert lay at the foundation of her sentiments, affections and practices on religious subjects. She was entirely persuaded of the holiness, justice and goodness of God, in the condemnation and punishment of sinners. Being fully sensible, that she had broken the holy and perfect law of God, she bowed with penitence and submission to its dreadful curse. She therefore turned to the atoning sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, which was made by his own blood on the cross, for forgiveness and salvation from endless and deserved punishment. But she did not so pervert and abuse the gospel of the grace of God, as to imagine she might continue in sin, because his grace abounds. She habitually and tenderly felt her obligations to be holy, as God is holy; and she maintained the conflict with her spiritual enemies, with humble confidence in the power and grace of the Holy Spirit. Nor did she foolishly and wickedly plead her dependance upon God, as any excuse for her own voluntary sinfulness, or as any hindrance to her obedient exertions in his holy service. For her instruction and encouragement in the christian warfare, she felt her constant need of the faithful ministry of the gospel, the communion of real christians and the ordinances of divine appointment. The house of God and the public services and devotions of the sabbath she es-

teemed more than her necessary food. And it is believed, that she was rarely, if ever, absent from public worship, when she was able to be present, during the many years of her christian profession. In the recent trials and dangers of the church in this place, she was serious, prayerful, decided and zealous for the real interests of piety and religion. Her character and conduct have entitled her to a high place, in the esteem and affection of her christian acquaintance, as well as of the numerous and respectable circle of her relatives and connections. Her many years of trial and faithful piety and obedience to the gospel matured and prepared her immortal spirit, for her sudden departure from this evil world to the endless rest and perfect joys of heaven.

And now it is the solemn duty of her surviving relatives and her christian friends to make such an application and improvement of the instructions, which God gives us by her life and her death, that they may live as she lived and die as she died, in friendship and favor both with God and man.

The bereaved and afflicted husband, in the scenes of a long, active and useful life, has not before been visited by such an affecting trial, as God has now been pleased to bring upon him. Amidst the many burdens and cares of a numerous family and his constant services in publick and important offices, he has been highly blessed and honored, by having, in the wife of his youth and the companion of his bosom, a pious friend. But now he is left alone. All his children, except two daughters, who have been married and have died before their mother's death, are now settled in their several families and are turning and spreading their flourishing branches from their aged father. His public services are nearly finished; his days are numbered and his term of trial will be soon closed for the decisions of the final judgment and the retributions of eternity. His useful and important exertions in favor of religion require us to believe, that his spiritual and eternal interests may have a deeper place in his mind than he has commonly

been disposed, either publicly, or privately, to express. If these interests have not been secured, by a penitent, believing and holy reliance upon the only foundation of hope and safety for human beings; he must be peculiarly sensible, under his present bereavement and affliction, that he needs the special presence and favor of God, the tender affection and friendship of the Lord Jesus Christ and the instructions and consolations of the Holy Spirit. While he has hope and comfort respecting the piety of his deceased companion and her joyful admission into heaven, may his present affliction be sanctified to his own preparation for a peaceful death and a blessed and glorious eternity.

The children, who are called this day, to commit the body of their pious, beloved and honored mother to the grave, are admonished and required to make a wise and happy improvement of this afflictive dispensation. Before she was called to the cares and duties of a wife and mother, she gave herself unto God, in an everlasting covenant. By this great, solemn and joyful transaction, she was prepared to discharge, towards her children, the highest services of the parental relation. She presented her children, in their infancy, unto the eternal and ever blessed God, in the ordinance of baptism, for the blessing of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. And they have no reason to suppose, that she ever forgot her public and solemn vows, which she made before God on their behalf, with the deep and tender interest and compassion of a pious mother's heart. Her children and her children's children were before her mind and on her heart, from the day of their birth unto the day of her own death. And now her piety and prayers, her example and instructions are before God; and they will be fully manifest to her descendants at the great and last day. And ought they not to be before the eyes and on the hearts of her children and grand-children; and to influence their sentiments, affections and actions? Was she unwise in her youthful devotion of herself to the service

of her Creator and Redeemer? Was she unwise in her uniform adherence to the holy doctrines and duties of the gospel? Can those of her children, who have followed her example in a public profession of religion, see any reason to be less attentive, faithful and zealous than their mother has been, in the service of God? And can those of her children, who have not, in this respect, followed her example, justify, or excuse their conduct? Your mother, who has gone before you in the path of life and your children, who follow you, call upon you to be holy, humble and faithful servants of the living and true God. There is one course and only one course, that you can take, with any good hope or safety. I should dishonor the character and memory of your mother, now her tongue is silent in death and her heart no more beats, with holy and tender compassion for her children and grand-children, if I did not urge and intreat you, who are her descendants, to hear, obey and enjoy the gospel of the grace and glory of God, now, in this your day, before the things of your peace are forever hidden from your eyes.

Her brothers and sisters have had her profession and her example, in favour of religion, from their early days. They believe she has gone to heaven. And have they not reason to believe she has gone to heaven in the right way?—and in the only way?—Did she not believe, profess and maintain, through the trials of more than fifty years, the pure, holy and humbling doctrines, which God teaches by Moses and the prophets, by Jesus Christ and the apostles? and which he confirms by the wonders of creation, providence and redemption? Did she not walk with God in the duties of the gospel and receive and enjoy the evidences and expressions of his truth, mercy and faithfulness? Do not her sentiments, her profession, her example and her comforts and enjoyments in the service and favor of God, tenderly and solemnly urge her beloved brothers and sisters to believe and obey the instructions, which were the foundation of her piety and which guided and guarded her, amidst the

numerous delusions and temptations of this world and of this day and of this place, in the straight and narrow way, which leads to heaven? An example of consistent piety, for fifty years, in an affectionate and beloved sister, has a strong claim upon the attention, the consciences and affections of her surviving brothers and sisters, now she can no more speak to God for you, nor speak to you for God.

The members of the church, with which she was connected so long a time, have often heard her voice while she lived; and now, being dead, she yet speaks. And God also speaks, both by her life and by her death. While afflicted by her death, have the members of this church consolation from the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ? Have they not also had hope and comfort, through the gospel, by her life? They must soon follow, in rapid succession, to the silent grave and into the world of spirits. The voice of God in his providence, as well as the voice of his Spirit, loudly and solemnly call and warn every member of this church, not to be slothful, but to follow, with increasing diligence, watchfulness and fidelity, those, "who through faith and patience inherit the promises." "Take heed, therefore, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God. But exhort one another, daily, while it is called to-day, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For the time is come, that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them, that obey not the gospel?" Let every hearer, therefore, remember, that "it is appointed unto men once to die; but after this the judgment." At the final judgment, be assured, the Lord Jesus Christ, who now calls you to repentance and holiness, shall say unto the wicked—"Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."—And he says "these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal."





